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RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, DRL, INR/AA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/01/2019
TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL NI
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH FORMER HEAD OF STATE
BABANGIDA

REF: A. ABUJA 1419
     ¶B. ABUJA 1405
     ¶C. ABUJA 1398

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McAnulty for reasons 1.4 (b
) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Former Nigerian Head of State Ibrahim
Badamasi Babangida met with Ambassador August 3 to share his
perspectives on the recent spate of Boko Haram-led violence
in the north, electoral reform, and his view that President
Yar'Adua's has neither the leadership nor the experience to
effectively address these issues. End Summary.

¶2. (C) When asked his views on the eruption of violence in
northeast Nigeria, Babangida admitted he was shocked to see
the scale and coordination of the attacks, which spanned four
states. However, he held that there were serious warning
signs across the region about Boko Haram,s activities and
that the GON was aware of and should have taken action ahead
of time, adding that the undercurrent of discontent among
youths in the north made them perfect recruits for Muhammad
Yusuf and Boko Haram. Babangida suggested that many of the
mistakes during the conflict stemmed from the "incompetency
and inexperience of the current government," explaining that
Yar'Adua's advisors did not have the necessary depth of
experience and sophistication to resolve such conflicts. He
also predicted that "we are only seeing a temporary halt to
this type of violence" given the lack of social, political,
and economic development in Nigeria today.

¶3. (C) Babangida intimated that the true story behind Yusuf's
death was that "the military captured Yusuf and handed him
over to the police, who then killed him." He admitted the
concern among authorities that Yusuf would be set free again
as occurred in 2007, but asserted that any claim that the
absence of anti-terrorism laws made it more difficult to
prosecute radicals like Yusuf was a "lame excuse;" existing
laws on disturbing the peace and other provisions can be
effectively used. He did strongly abhor the extrajudicial
action by the police. Babangida speculated that some
government leaders may have been more complicit than others
with extremist groups, including with Yusuf's movement,
because they benefitted politically from these groups
targeting their opponents.

¶4. (C) On electoral reform, Babangida expressed frustration
and disappointment with the People's Democratic Party (PDP),

specifically its inability to resolve internal conflicts
democratically. He pointed out that several PDP members
criticized their party for lack of inclusiveness; PDP's
internal problems will get worse unless credible elections
occur. Without credible electoral reform, he said he would
have no confidence in the 2011 elections.

¶5. (C) Praising President Obama's Accra message that "there
is no need for strong men, but rather strong institutions,"
he linked this theme to his own aspirations for the PDP to
build up strong regional branches of the PDP, rather than one
central body. He also said he was advocating for allowing
regionally-based political parties to develop vice national
parties; for example, have PDP only be in the North, the AC
party in the Southwest, and so on. Babangida attributed
PDP,s internal conflict to the party's centralized
structure. He predicted that attempts from PDP opposition
parties to form a megaparty will ultimately fail because it
would have too many divergent ideologies and platforms.

¶6. (C) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
SANDERS